

Fact Sheet:

National College Health Risk Behavior Survey

About the NCHRBS

The National College Health Risk Behavior Survey (NCHRBS) was conducted in 1995 among undergraduate college students. Results from the survey were published in the MMWR, Volume 46, Number SS-1, November 14, 1997. The survey monitors priority health risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death, illness, and social problems among young adults in the United States, including

- Tobacco use;
- Unhealthy dietary behaviors;
- Inadequate physical activity;
- Alcohol and other drug use;
- Sexual behaviors that may result in HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases, and unintended pregnancies;
- Behaviors that may result in unintentional injuries (such as motor vehicle crashes) and violence including suicide.

Data use

NCHRBS data are used to

- Determine the prevalence of health-risk behaviors among college students;
- Allow researchers to examine the co-occurrence of health risk behaviors among college students;
- Monitor progress toward achieving Healthy People 2010 objectives;
- Determine what health information students receive from their colleges or universities;
- Assess whether health-risk behaviors increase, decrease, or remain the same over time.

Data collection

The NCHRBS questionnaire was developed by CDC in collaboration with representatives from universities, relevant national organizations, and federal agencies. The survey was conducted through the mail and used multiple mail and telephone follow-ups to help ensure a good response rate. Responses to the NCHRBS questionnaire were both voluntary and confidential. NCHRBS used a scientific sample of students enrolled in public and private, 2- and 4-year colleges and universities. Questionnaires were received from 4,609 eligible students. The results are generalizable to undergraduate college students nationwide aged 18 years or older.

CDC plans to repeat the NCHRBS in 2003.

For additional information on NCHRBS, contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Adolescent and School Health, 4770 Buford Highway, NE, Mailstop K32, Atlanta, GA 30341-3717, telephone (888) 231-6405, <http://www.cdc.gov/yrbss>.



Percentage of Undergraduate College Students Who Engaged in Health Risk Behaviors

Injury-related behaviors	18-24 yrs.	≥25 yrs.	Total
Rarely or never used seat belts when riding in a car	11.1	7.8	10.2
Drove after drinking alcohol ¹	27.8	26.7	27.4
Carried a weapon (such as gun, knife, or club) ^{1,2}	8.5	7.3	8.0
Participated in a physical fight ³	13.2	4.8	10.2
Seriously considered attempting suicide ³	11.4	8.3	10.3
Tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use			
Current cigarette use ¹	28.8	28.7	29.0
Current episodic heavy drinking ⁴	41.5	22.0	34.5
Current marijuana use ¹	17.3	8.3	14.0
Lifetime cocaine use	6.6	28.1	14.4
Sexual behaviors			
Ever had sexual intercourse	79.5	97.8	86.1
6 or more sex partners during lifetime	25.7	49.6	34.5
Condom use during last sexual intercourse ⁵	37.7	18.5	29.6
Dietary behaviors			
Overweight ⁶	15.5	28.8	20.5
Exercised to lose weight or keep from gaining weight ¹	53.4	54.0	53.6
Ate 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables ⁷	25.0	28.5	26.3
Physical Activity			
Vigorous physical activity ⁸	41.8	30.6	37.6
Moderate physical activity ⁹	20.2	18.1	19.5
Strengthening exercises ¹⁰	33.4	23.5	29.9

¹ During the 30 days preceding the survey.

² Not including carrying a weapon for job-related reasons.

³ During the 12 months preceding the survey.

⁴ Had drunk ≥5 drinks of alcohol on at least one occasion on ≥1 of the 30 days preceding the survey.

⁵ Among students who had had sexual intercourse during the 3 months preceding the survey

⁶ Overweight is defined as a body mass index (BMI = weight [kg]/height[m]²) ≥27.8 for men and ≥27.3 for women. This classification was based on the 85th percentile value for BMI among persons aged 20-29 years in the Second National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

⁷ On the day preceding the survey.

⁸ Activities that caused sweating and hard breathing for ≥20 minutes on ≥3 of the 7 days preceding the survey.

⁹ Walked or bicycled for ≥30 minutes on ≥5 of the 7 days preceding the survey.

¹⁰ Such as push-ups, sit-ups, or weight lifting on ≥3 of the 7 days preceding the survey.